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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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SMUGGLING ACROSS THE ODER-NEISSE LINE

Large-scale smuggling activities have developed between Poland and the GDR, along the Oder-Neisse line. While it is difficult to cross the border, there are various points at which German and Polish smugglers meet. Hundreds of persons daily cross the Oder in both directions. Some of the smugglers have well-functioning organizations and maintain connections in both countries, so that they can sell their goods quickly and purchase new supplies at once.

The Polish and GDR governments have not been able to stem the tide of illegal border crossers, although they have made every effort and have taken severe countermeasures. The Poles have set up a 10-kilometer restricted zone, in which all persons are checked closely, but except for some individual cases, this has not served to stop the smuggling.

The smugglers are mostly inhabitants of the border region who are familiar with the terrain and are willing to take the risk. They are people who live in great need and are forced to look for an additional source of income. Smuggling usually is conducted on the basis of specific orders for goods. The prices regulate themselves according to the laws of supply and demand.

The articles smuggled to Poland include nylon hose and silk fabrics. At present, alarm clocks and wristwatches, which are available in the East German HO (Trade Organization) shops, are very much in demand. The Poles generally smuggle out food (fats and bacon), which is bartered for East German goods. There is great demand among the Polish buyers for West German pharmaceuticals which have reached the GDR. These goods bring very high profits. In the smuggling trade, 25 "Togal" tablets are worth 4 kilograms of bacon. Evipan, Sympatol, and especially penicillin are also in very great demand.

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